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# Recommendation for funding from other resources without a recommendation for funding from regular resources**

## Gulf Area subregional programme

*Summary*

The present document contains a recommendation for funding from other resources for the Gulf Area subregional programme covering five countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). The programme proposal submitted here is aimed at expanding or complementing an ongoing programme. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board approve funding from other resources in the amount of $660,000 for the year 2003, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions.

* E/ICEF/2002/11.

** The figures provided in the present document are final and take into account unspent balances of programme cooperation at the end of 2001. They will be contained in the summary of recommendations for regular resources and other resources programmes for 2002 (E/ICEF/2002/P/L.36).

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# The work of UNICEF in the Gulf Area

1. Six countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates — form the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) and, for purposes of this document, will be referred to as "the Gulf countries". UNICEF currently serves Oman through a country office in Muscat and the remaining five countries through the Gulf Area Office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

2. UNICEF operated country programmes in each of the Gulf countries in the 1970s. Of these, only the programme for Oman continues today, and it is scheduled tc phase out from use of regular resources at the end of 2003. In the five Gulf countries not served by a country programme, UNICEF has continued to respond to government requests for assistance in areas of programme planning and training. Over the past year, UNICEF has assisted the five countries in preparing situation analyses intended to form the basis for future actions on behalf of children.

3. The UNICEF partnership in the Gulf started on traditional lines, but after the mid-1980s there was a gradual shift towards technical support, with direct provision of supplies and equipment being phased out. From 1985 to 1995, the Gulf Area Office supported research, planning and training workshops, development of training materials and information dissemination aimed at improving maternal and child health and nutrition. Efforts to improve the quality of primary education consisted of strengthening training of female teachers, including for pre-school education, incorporation of health education in primary school curricula and promotion of girls' education. Technical support was provided for a series of workshops to develop national plans of action following the World Summit for Children. Significant intercountry workshops included one on Child Rights and Care in Islam, co-sponsored with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and one on country reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organized in cooperation with the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare.

4. In 1995, in line with the formula for allocation of regular resources, the Gulf Area Office became a self-funded office. The implication was that its role would to shift to advocacy for child-related issues, external relations and fund-raising and limited, short-term programme interventions from global or regional funds. The downsizing of the office structure began in 1996 and since then, UNICEF has maintained a presence without funding from regular resources, with activities continuing using funds generated by the sale of greeting cards. Opportunities for local fund-raising have also developed, but in the absence of Executive Board approval, the funds generated could not be used locally. The continued demand for UNICEF support and the current and potential receipt of other resources warrant a framework to allow the Gulf Area Office to use locally-generated funds.

5. The present recommendation for funding from other resources without funding from regular resources for the Gulf Area Office is aimed at further development of a framework for new modalities of partnership, commensurate with each State's development context and the follow-up to the General Assembly special session on children. This will also time to explore the possibilities of creating Gulf-wide synergies using the UNICEF presence in Riyadh and Muscat, which will result in a synchronized planning cycle for the two offices.

## The situation of children and women

6. The Gulf countries have made remarkable progress in improving the situation of children and women. The economic boom of the 1970s and early 1980s allowed massive investment in basic services infrastructures for education, health, safe drinking water and environmental sanitation facilities. The enormous progress is reflected in the social indicators of the Gulf. Under-five mortality rates range from 9 per 1,000 live births in the United Arab Emirates in 1999 (down from 128 in 1960) to 25 per 1,000 live births in Saudi Arabia (down from 292 in 1960). Immunization coverage is now above 90 per cent in most cases. Net primary school enrolment rates range from close to 100 per cent for boys and girls in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, to 81 per cent for boys and 73 per cent for girls in Saudi Arabia (1997). Over 90 per cent of primary-schoolchildren reach grade five in all countries of the Gulf Area.

7. The fact that the Gulf countries were among the first to prepare follow-up plans to the World Summit for Children with two sets of goals for mid- and end-decade, followed by concrete action, is proof of their commitment to child survival and development. However, this positive transformation in social indicators has been exclusively led by Governments and is not demand driven. Alternate mechanisms to support and advocate for child rights, including the national commissions or councils recently set up in all five countries, are at an early developmental stage and need reinforcement.

8. Despite major achievements, challenges remain, particularly as the process of handing over from expatriate to national service providers accelerates. The population is predominantly youthful, with 50 per cent under 18 years of age. There is a need to sustain the high levels of service coverage achieved and to ensure full equity of access to services. National health surveys suggest pockets of disparities, with higher rates of infant and under-five mortality and micronutrient deficiencies in some rural areas. Women's health remains a concern and relatively high fertility and malnutrition rates need to be addressed. In the educational system, there is room to improve the quality of the curriculum, monitor learning achievements and promote "child-friendly" schools. Issues related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect are now gaining visibility. Other emerging concerns are the inadequate participation of adolescents in civil society; their adoption of unhealthy lifestyles including growing substance abuse; and insufficient parental understanding of the needs of children, especially in early childhood and adolescence.

9. These concerns are reflected in the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the reports submitted by Gulf countries, which are consistently accompanied by recommendations that the States work with UNICEF on such issues.

## Lessons learned from previous cooperation

10. During the course of UNICEF work in the Gulf, countries achieved much progress in the areas of immunization, oral rehydration and girls' access to education. Programmatic results showed that advocacy for improvements in child-focused initiatives would not succeed without local experience that demonstrated the practicality and applicability of the approaches advocated. At the same time,

experience showed a keenness on the part of partners to apply innovations in social services rapidly once there practicality had been demonstrated.

11. In general, Governments in the Gulf have been active in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and have expressed their willingness to work with UNICEF on issues raised as a result of the reporting process. Experience indicates that social transition under way in the Gulf countries has laid the basis for Governments to tackle sensitive issues, provided that patience and cultural sensitivity lead the process. The Governments acknowledge that the advocacy and technical partnership of UNICEF will be key to their efforts to address these issues effectively. This partnership is considered essential for the practical adoption of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the special session on Children.

12. Consultations are currently under way with the respective States to redefine modalities for partnership, including funding. In addition to the potential to enhance current revenues from the sale of greeting cards, good opportunities exist for local private sector fund-raising to support programme initiatives. These efforts, however, need time and sustained efforts to develop.

## Proposed programme of cooperation for 2003

13. Based on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, lessons learned and available situation analyses, future programmes of cooperation in the Gulf Area will be built on: (a) monitoring of trends and analysis of the situation of children, adolescents and women; (b) advocacy for policy and legislative and relevant administrative developments for the enhanced protection of child rights; (c) institutional capacity-building for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (d) leveraging of increased government resources for children, and private sector fund-raising.

14. The overall objective of the programme in the Gulf countries in 2003 is to contribute to the development and reinforcement of national plans and mechanisms for the full realization of the rights of children, adolescents and women. Suggested areas of special focus within the overall programme framework include early childcare, quality education, child protection and adolescent participation and development, with gender responsiveness as a cross-cutting theme.

15. The first project, advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, aims to raise awareness among policy makers and the public about the Convention and its relevance to the countries of the Gulf Area. The project will support continued advocacy with and through national commissions or councils for children and mothers. It will also promote their technical capacity-building for monitoring trends, preparing reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and planning follow-up to the Committee's recommendations. Partnerships with media will be enhanced to increase public awareness, and with the private sector to supplement government efforts. Fact-based advocacy will be built into policy dialogue and training events, including for media.

16. The second project aims to develop an integrated approach to early childhood care and development that will lay the basis for the development of parental education programmes with the support of the media and outreach mechanisms. The

project's promotional focus will encompass linkages between health, nutrition and psychosocial aspects. Sharing of experiences with similar initiatives in the region will be encouraged.

17. The third project, young people's development and participation, aims to increase the knowledge base in respect of young people's situation, attitudes and practices. Data gaps will need to be filled and research undertaken, taking into account country-specific situations. Advocacy for increasing opportunities for both girls and boys to participate in developmental activities will be based on existing information and on new data as they become available. Focus group discussions will enable young people to discuss issues relevant to them. Promotion of healthy lifestyles will include a focus on HIV/AIDS prevention. Participation of youth in national planning events and regional and subregional forums will be encouraged.

18. Cross-sectoral costs will be used to provide overarching technical expertise, plus programme and financial monitoring and evaluation.

## Coordination with partners

19. The overall scope of partnership frameworks and the range of activities will be determined and undertaken in close collaboration with each State. Besides national Governments, key partners will include national commissions and councils for children and mothers, media and the private sector. Supportive links will be explored with such regional and subregional institutions as the AGCC and the Arab Gulf Fund for United Nations Development Organizations, in addition to the United Nations agencies present in the Gulf. UNICEF will also participate in the development of Common Country Assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks which may be initiated in any of the five States. Networking will be encouraged between the five States and with Oman on the main areas of focus.

## Administrative structure

20. The UNICEF Gulf Area office in Riyadh will handle the coordination aspects, as appropriate, in collaboration with partners mentioned above. The Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in Amman will provide reinforced consultative, technical and advocacy support. Short-term external technical assistance will be engaged as required.

**Estimated expenditure — 2003**

(In thousands of United States dollars)

| | *Other resources* |
|---|---|
| Advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child | 150 |
| Early childhood care and development | 120 |
| Young people's development and participation | 120 |
| Cross-sectoral costs | 270 |
| **Total** | **660** |